

Texas Education Agency Reading Academies Cohort Leader Screener

Findings and Learnings for Future Work



Our work at a glance

Since 2007, Texas' reading scores had been declining, and there was a shortage of qualified teachers trained in effective reading practices. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) conceptualized Reading Academies where teachers learn, practice, implement and reflect. Cohort Leaders serve as the lead facilitators for the new K-3 Reading Academies. TEA needed assistance with a streamlined process for recruiting and training the Cohort Leaders and supporting them in delivering the Reading Academies. Addressing this need could result in substantial improvements for all students in Texas as defined in ESEA Subpart 2—Literacy Education for All, Sec. 2221 (a)(b).

In partnership with the Region 14 Comprehensive Center (R14CC), Education Elements supported the recruitment, hiring, onboarding, training, and project management of a team of graders and moderators who contributed to timely, accurate, and impactful grading and feedback of each window of Cohort Leader Screener (CLS). While this work is specific to TEA CLS, the process and learnings could be applied to:



**HQIM
Materials Audit**



**Statewide Asynchronous
Learning**



**Establishing
Reading Academies**



**Educator Preparation
Programs**



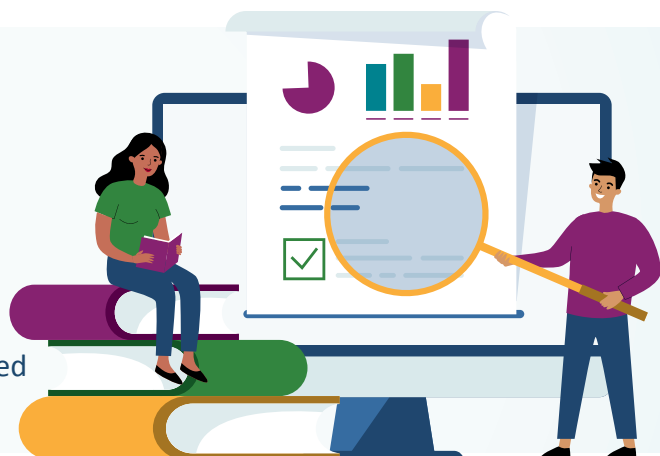
**Creating
Math Academies**



**Secondary Science
of Reading**

Learning from Research, Enhancing the Future

As the education landscape continues to emphasize the need for research-based, high-quality instructional materials, more opportunities may be present to use established systems for independent reviewers.



Key Learnings + Future Applications

Since 2020, we have supported 25 windows of CLS and more than 3,300 unique learners, impacting tens of thousands of students across Texas.



**Plan + Align
Upfront**



**Establish Plans
for Change**



**Act As
the User**



**Consider
Future Users**



**Codify Training
and Systems**



**Share
Impact**



**Retro
Regularly**



**Measure
What Matters**



**Facilitate
Focus Groups**

Plan for Change, Retrospective Regularly

What We Learned

Throughout the course of the project, the work expanded and evolved from a small cohort of leaders focused on reading instruction to a robust, state and national focus on the Science of Reading. As the demand for ensuring high quality literacy instruction increased, the need for courses to include different types of learners increased as well. Our initial use case excluded new learners, and we also found that the initial course material could be more closely aligned to research-based practices for literacy.

Why This Matters

Project plans are typically designed to address the need as we currently understand it, but as work changes and adapts, we must have time set aside for critically evaluating the extent to which our work meets the needs of today.

Applying to Your Work

Build a project plan that allows for regular retrospection, ensuring your teams have systems in place to reflect on and adjust your work. Prior to starting, brainstorm all the users who may be impacted by your work and consider their needs 6 months, 1 year, and even 3 years in the future. Consider designating a teammate to regularly review research and embed new learnings into your approach.

Resources

Ways to Plan for Change Based on Data - <https://www.edelements.com/blog/strategic-planning-with-data-lessons-learned-from-spring-break>
Sample Retrospectives to use with teams - <https://www.edelements.com/blog/three-retrospectives-we-love-for-reflecting-on-return-planning>
A Guide for Data Culture - <https://www.edelements.com/data-culture-guide>
A Guide to Conducting Focus Groups - <https://www.edelements.com/lp-include-a-guide-to-conducting-focus-groups>

Measure What Matters, Collaborate with Users

What We Learned

Measuring the success of this project was not straightforward. We support leaders who support educators to develop strong instructional practices, which then impacts student achievement. Being removed from the actual classroom data makes quantifying student impact challenging. In addition, those creating the course are not the same as those using the course, grading the course, or observing the output of the course. We learned we need to bring multiple constituents together to create a strong product and regularly collect and respond to the data that matters most.

Why This Matters

Understanding not only the outcomes and impact of the work, but also the user experience for a variety of constituents along the way, is crucial for ensuring the work is scalable, impactful, and aligned with the overarching objectives.

Applying to Your Work

Facilitate focus groups, not only with the end user but also with related groups, like campus administrators and graders. Apply learnings from their experience into project updates. Identify options for measuring the classroom impact of the work (such as number of students impacted or capturing pre- and post-data for a subset of users).



Sharing Ideas for Risk Mitigation



Maintaining a consistent pool of highly qualified graders

Mitigation

- » Codify and record training to ensure onboarding is quick and effective
- » Survey graders or reviewers before each cycle to align on capacity
- » Assign a project manager to review grader/reviewer progress each cycle and redistribute work as needed
- » Train an in-house reviewer to be available if emergencies arise



Turnover from SEA, graders, and internal teams

Mitigation

- » Identify metrics for fidelity and effectiveness, in addition to impact
- » Create a cross-section or pilot group to capture a sample of student data
- » Add options for users to share change on student experience through quantitative and qualitative measures



Inability to capture relevant data due to distance from student experience

Mitigation

- » Keep an updated project brief or overview deck with related recording to share
- » Maintain “How-To” videos for overseeing graders/moderators to allow for easy transfer of knowledge